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The situation in the Middle East

Question of Palestine

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories

Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources

Letter dated 5 January 2009 from the Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

I have the honour to address you in my capacity as Chairman of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement concerning the serious situation in the Gaza Strip.

The members of the Non-Aligned Movement are following events on the ground with great concern and strongly condemn the military aggression that Israel, the occupying Power, is carrying out against Gaza.

In flagrant disregard of the international community's appeals for the cessation of military activities and of the ongoing diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis, Israel has further escalated its military offensive by launching a ground invasion of Gaza.

As a result of these activities, thousands of innocent civilians, including many Palestinian children, have already died or been injured.

I would like to thank you and your team for the attention that you have paid to this issue and for your vigorous action and statements aimed at bringing an immediate end to the military activities and alleviating the humanitarian situation of the people of Gaza.

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I reiterate that you will always be able to rely on the support of the Non-Aligned Movement and that we stand ready to take any action that you may deem appropriate in support of your work.

The members of the Non-Aligned Movement are particularly concerned at the fact that the Security Council has, as yet, been unable to meet its responsibilities under the current circumstances and to take concrete measures to halt the aggression. The Movement will continue to monitor the situation and, in due course, will decide on the appropriateness of advocating action in other forums, including the possibility of bringing the matter before the General Assembly.

I attach herewith a copy of the statement made today by the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement concerning the escalation of Israel's military attack on the Gaza Strip (see annex).

I would be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda items 15 ("The situation in the Middle East"), 16 ("The question of Palestine"), 29 ("United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East"), 30 ("Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories") and 38 ("Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources").

(*Signed*) Abelardo **Moreno Fernández**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations
Chairman of the Coordinating Bureau of
the Non-Aligned Movement

Annex to the letter dated 5 January 2009 from the Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

[Original: English]

Statement by the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement on the escalation of the Israeli military aggression against the Gaza Strip in the Occupied Palestinian Territory

The Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) strongly condemns the escalation of the military aggression being carried out by Israel, the occupying Power, in the Gaza Strip. NAM is gravely concerned by and condemns in particular the launching of the Israeli ground invasion in Gaza in flagrant defiance of the calls by the international community for a cessation of military activities and of the regional and international diplomatic efforts under way to resolve the current crisis.

NAM expresses its deep regret at the loss of innocent life as a result of the ongoing Israeli military attacks against the Strip, including the killing of more than 460 Palestinian civilians, among them several children, and the injuring of nearly more than 2,500 other civilians, as well as the massive destruction of property and infrastructure in the Gaza Strip.

NAM reiterates that this unacceptable Israeli military aggression against the Palestinian civilian population in the Gaza Strip constitutes a grave breach of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, fuels the cycle of violence and threatens international peace and security as well as the fragile peace process between the two sides.

NAM calls for an immediate cessation of all military activities and violence and for the implementation of an immediate general ceasefire. Israel should immediately cease all its military attacks and scrupulously abide by all of its obligations, as the occupying Power, under international law and relevant United Nations resolutions. In this regard, the Movement urges Israel to unconditionally comply with its obligations under international law, including the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949.

In view of the indiscriminate bombings affecting the civilian population, including women and children, as well as the severe humanitarian crisis prevailing in Gaza, NAM also calls for the immediate provision of protection for the Palestinian civilian population in the Gaza Strip in accordance with the relevant provisions of international humanitarian law.

The Movement expresses grave concern about the deepening humanitarian crisis being faced by the Palestinian civilian population in Gaza as a result of the current military actions, the continued closure of all border crossings and the obstruction of access of humanitarian aid, including food and medicines, and the reduction of fuel and electricity supplies to the Gaza Strip by Israel.

In this context, NAM calls upon Israel to end the collective punishment of the Palestinian people and to allow for the immediate and sustained opening of the Gaza

Strip's border crossings to ensure the free access of humanitarian aid and other essential supplies and goods as well as to facilitate the passage of persons to and from the Gaza Strip.

In light of the gravity of this crisis, NAM expresses its deep disappointment at the inability of the Security Council to uphold its responsibilities in maintaining international peace and security. Despite more than a week of sustained military attacks that have gravely affected the civilian population and heightened instability and tensions in the region, the Council has regrettably been unable to take any concrete measure to end the aggression. Once again, the Movement requests the Security Council to act urgently to address this grave situation.

NAM stresses the need for intensified and coordinated efforts by the international community to bring an end to this crisis and to exert all necessary efforts to support and promote the peace process as well as to ensure respect for international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law, the key to a peaceful settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole, as the sole means to guarantee a lasting peace in the region.

The Movement is convinced that there is no military solution to the conflict. In this context, NAM reaffirms its commitment to a peaceful solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to the right of the Palestinian people to exercise self-determination and sovereignty in their independent State of Palestine, on the basis of the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

New York, 5 January 2009